

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANILA 24395 01 OF 02 271149Z
ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 SSO-00 /031 W
-----099388 271151Z /10
O 271104Z DEC 79
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4064
INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 24395

EXDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 12065: RDS 12/27/99 (MURPHY, RICHARD W.) OR-M
TAGS: PINT, RP, PINS
SUBJECT: MARCOS DISCUSSES AQUINO'S FUTURE

REF: MANILA 24394, MANILA 24306

1. (CONFIDENTIAL ENTIRE TEXT.)

2. SUMMARY: MARCOS APPEARS TO HAVE DECIDED TO RELEASE
AQUINO FROM DETENTION AND SEND HIM TO EXILE. WE ARE NOT YET
PRIVY TO PRESIDENT'S MOTIVATION AND TIMING FOR THIS DECISION
END SUMMARY.

3. IN DECEMBER 27 MEETING, AS MARCOS WAS DISCUSSING HIS
INTENT TO FOSTER AN ADVERSARY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE
GOVERNMENT AND ITS CRITICS IN THE JANUARY LOCAL ELECTION
CAMPAIGN, I ASKED HIM TO COMMENT ON AQUINO'S POSSIBLE ROLE
THEREIN. NOTED DECEMBER 26 NEW YORK TIMES REPORT THAT
AQUINO HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE HIS NEW STATUS OF HOUSE
ARREST MIGHT PRECEDE HIS RELEASE FROM DETENTION, ON CON-
DITION HE AGREED TO GO INTO EXILE. TO QUESTION WHETHER
AQUINO HAD EXPRESSED INTEREST IN PARTICIPATING IN THE
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JANUARY ELECTIONS, PRESIDENT ANSWERED IN FLAT NEGATIVE.
SAID AQUINO HAD PASSED WORD HE HAD BEEN BANKRUPTED BY THE
1978 IBP CAMPAIGN, WHICH HAD COST HIM ONE MILLION PESOS, AND
HE WAS DISILLUSIONED WITH THE STATE OF THE POLITICAL
OPPOSITION. AQUINO, MARCOS ASSERTED, BELIEVES THAT THE
LABAN PARTY SHOULD GIVE WAY TO AND UNITE BEHIND THE LEADER-
SHIP OF THE LIBERAL PARTY.

4. I THEN ASKED WHAT AQUINO'S THOUGHTS WERE ABOUT HIS OWN FUTURE. MARCOS REPLIED THAT AQUINO HAD ALWAYS BEEN "A FREE WHEELING OPERATOR WITHOUT ANY IDEOLOGY." GOP INTELLIGENCE BELIEVED THAT AQUINO HAS YET TO CUT HIS OLD TIES WITH THE MARXIST NPA BUT BEYOND THIS, PRESIDENT SAID, HE COULD NOT ANSWER MY QUESTION WITH ANY CERTAINTY. HE SAID HE INTENDED TO MEET WITH AQUINO SHORTLY TO HEAR HIS CURRENT THINKING ABOUT HIS FUTURE FIRST HAND.

5. THE THREE ALTERNATIVES FOR AQUINO'S FUTURE, MARCOS SAID, REMAIN EXILE, HOUSE ARREST, OR RELEASE IN THE PHILIPPINES. SHOULD AQUINO GO TO THE UNITED STATES, HE MIGHT, WHATEVER HE WERE TO PLEDGE TO CONTRARY, GET INVOLVED IN FILIPINO EXILE POLITICS. MARCOS INDICATED HE WOULD FIND THIS TOLERABLE. AQUINO DOES NOT WISH, PRESIDENT UNDERSTANDS, TO BE RELEASED IN THE PHILIPPINES. HE HAS PASSED WORD TO THE PRESIDENT THAT IF HE IS RELEASED HERE HE WILL BE CONTINUOUSLY COURTED BY SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS SEEKING HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR PLANS. ONE QUESTION AQUINO MUST ANSWER IS WHETHER HE IS WILLING TO MAINTAIN HIS PLEA FOR AMNESTY WITH THE SUPREME COURT. SOME LAWYERS HAVE ADVISED MARCOS THAT AQUINO HAS ALREADY "CONSTRUCTIVELY WITHDRAWN" HIS AMNESTY PETITION. HE, MARCOS, HOWEVER, CONSIDERS ANY SUCH WITHDRAWAL OF PLEA MUST BE DONE IN WRITING AND THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED. MARCOS SAID HE HAD TO CONSULT THE CHIEF JUSTICE
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AND WILL DO SO PRIOR TO HIS MEETING WITH AQUINO. BOTH MEETINGS WILL TAKE PLACE PRIOR TO THE END OF AQUINO'S CURRENT TWO WEEK HOUSE ARREST WHICH EXPIRES JANUARY 7. HE WILL INTER ALIA SEEK THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S OPINION ON WHETHER THE PRESIDENT HAS AUTHORITY TO GRANT A "CONDITIONAL PARDON" OR IMPOSE ANY CONDITIONS ON AN AMNESTY. PRESIDENT CONCLUDED "IF AQUINO SAYS HE IS READY TO GO INTO EXILE AND EVEN IF HE SAYS THIS IS ONLY FOR A LIMITED PERIOD OF TIME, I AM WILLING TO TRUST HIS WORD."

6. EMBOFF TODAY WAS TOLD BY DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER BARBERO THAT CHANCES ARE "BETTER THAN EVEN" THAT AQUINO WILL RECEIVE AN AMNESTY, WHOSE TERMS ARE NOW UNDER DISCUSSION. BARBERO ASSERTED AQUINO'S FAMILY WANTS TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY. HE NOTED AQUINO REALIZES THAT IF HE DEPARTS HE WILL LOSE POLITICAL ADVANTAGE AT HOME. BARBERO ADDED THAT OBVIOUSLY ALL DECISIONS AFFECTING AQUINO WILL BE MADE BY MARCOS PERSONALLY.

7. COMMENT: PUTTING MARCOS' PRESENTATION TOGETHER WITH WHAT AQUINO HAS BEEN TELLING JOURNALISTS FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES AND ASEAN WALL STREET JOURNAL (MANILA 24306) AND RE-

PORTING FROM OTHER CHANNELS, IT APPEARS WE ARE CLOSER THAN EVER BEFORE TO WITNESSING A CHANGE IN AQUINO'S STATUS. GIVEN MARCOS' GAME PLAN FOR THE ELECTIONS (MANILA 24394) AND FACT SO MANY ARE NOW AWARE OF THE STRONG POSSIBILITY OF HIS RELEASE FROM JAIL, WE BELIEVE MARCOS WOULD FIND IT DISADVANTAGEOUS SO TO MANEUVER THAT AQUINO ENDS UP BACK UNDER DETENTION AT THE END OF HIS PERIOD OF HOUSE ARREST ON JANUARY 7.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MANILA 24395

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8. AQUINO STANDS TO LOSE STATURE DOMESTICALLY IF HE DECIDES TO GO INTO EXILE. HIS PUBLIC APPEAL HAS BEEN SUSTAINED OVER THE YEARS BY HIS CONTINUED DETENTION. WHEN THE REGIME LEAKED WORD IN THE SUMMER OF 1978 THAT AQUINO HAD SOUGHT AMNESTY THERE WAS AN INSTANT ADVERSE REACTION AMONG HIS SUPPORTERS. WE DOUBT HE HAS RECOVERED THE HEIGHT OF PUBLIC ESTEEM WHICH HE ENJOYED DURING THE 1978 IBP CAMPAIGN.

9. THERE ARE CONFLICTING REPORTS ABOUT HIS FAMILY'S ATTITUDE. OUR SOURCES SAY THEY ARE DIVIDED OVER WHETHER HE SHOULD LEAVE THE COUNTRY. SOME OF HIS CHILDREN HAVE SAID FLATLY THEY WILL NOT LEAVE THE PHILIPPINES. MRS. AQUINO IS APPARENTLY VERY RELUCTANT TO GO ABROAD BUT HAS ON OCCASION BEEN REPORTED AS EAGER TO DO ANYTHING WHICH WOULD GET HER HUSBAND OUT OF JAIL.

10. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, OUR ALLEGED "INTERVENTIONS" ON AQUINO'S BEHALF IN PAST WAS ONCE PUBLICLY CITED BY MARCOS AND LATER BY THE LOCAL MEDIA AS REASON WHY THE PRESIDENT COULD NOT SANCTION HIS RELEASE FROM PRISON. I URGE THE DEPARTMENT MAKE NO SUBSTANTIVE COMMENT SHOULD QUESTIONS

STIMULATED BY THE NEW YORK TIMES AND WALL STREET JOURNAL
ACCOUNTS ARISE AT THE DAILY PRESS BRIEFING. MURPHY

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